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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

A WINDOW DECORATION.

BY ALMA STRONG.



HAT window persecuted me by day and haunted my dreams by night; waking or sleeping, in doors or out, it was an ever present problem over whose solution I vainly struggled. Unquestionably it must be rendered opaque, yet light giving capabilities must not be reduced, but how to accomplish this feat? that was the question.

Our landlord was old fashioned as his house and saw no reason why a "neat, ground glass" window that had contented his father and been a source of pride to his grandfather should offend the artistic sensibilities of the present generation. He evidently considered his new tenants a trifle unreasonable and inclined to indulge in frills and furbelows. That window was in perfect repair and was good enough for him, but if his tenants wished to squander money on it they were welcome to do so; the more the merrier. So armed with this, not too gracious permission, we set to work to devise a scheme of decoration that should relieve our eyes without darkening the room.

Like many Southern houses of its date it had high walls, large rooms, and high ceilings. Drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen and pantries were all on the same level. The first mentioned was forty-five feet long, by twenty odd wide, and nearly sixteen feet high; fluted pillars from which rose a graceful arch divided it in the middle. It was lighted from the front by two long oval top windows, and from the back by the one mentioned as my *bête noir*; this also being oval at the top reached to the floor, was about eight feet in width, and, unlike those in front, was composed of small panes, clear for the two upper rows but of ground glass below; it opened into a turn in the main hall, fitted with glass roof and side as a conservatory, and filled with vines and plants. Through this turn the servants were obliged to pass to answer a summons to the front door, rendering them perfectly visible to all visitors. I thought of stained glass but it absorbed too much light; a carved screen to the height of the ground glass with high plants behind was next suggested, but looked a fake and left the upper portion blank and bare; China silk on a brass rod was open to the same objection; draperies at the top were of course impossible; what was to be done?

That abominable window seemed to grin and wag its head with diabolical glee. It was a commonplace, obtrusive plebeian. As the bad grammar and vulgar ways of a shoddy millionaire appear the more glaring by contrast with his delicate surroundings, so the furnishings of the room only served to show in high relief its native ugliness. It seemed ever to say to all who entered there: "Here am I common and uncouth, obnoxious but desirable like the goose of golden egg fame; they hate me but they dare not destroy and I will not be hidden. Work away, work away, this is all very artistic but I can spoil it every bit."

Like many another self satisfied individual, even while rejoicing, his days of triumph were fast drawing to an end; in my mind there had been gradually taking form and shape an idea, destined in its maturity to change this ugly duckling into "a thing of beauty and a joy forever" to all beholders. How did I conquer my enemy? Listen.

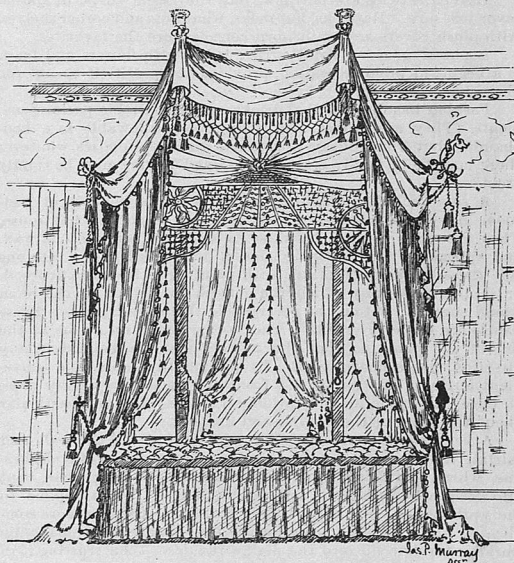
First came the glazier and instead of the twenty little cramped up panes of the old sash substituted two sheets of thick crystal; next a lace like carved screen two feet deep of dark mahogany color was secured, about three feet from the floor, to the window frame on the side toward the room;—now came the great battle. I had the glass cleaned and polished until it was absolutely without speck or stain; then with oil colors I painted the slender, bare branch of a tree on the outer side of the glass beginning at the upper right hand corner of the topmost pane and extending diagonally across it to near center, carefully showing all knots and little sockets for the leaf stems and a branch of leaf buds at the end and also at the ends of the twigs branching from the main stem. I added one or two short branches entering pane from top and side and laid my brushes aside after assuring myself that my work was everywhere perfectly opaque.

I had previously prepared duplicate designs for the entire window, one perforated; the latter I now secured to the glass by means of little dots of shoemakers' wax, and washed over the coarse perforations with a stiff brush dipped in white varnish, connecting these dotted lines after removing the paper. I now spread the duplicate on a long table and proceeded to select and fit my leaves and ferns. Leaves gathered in New England are best for this purpose as they are thinner than those found elsewhere and their hues more brilliant and lasting; if rendered semi-transparent with wax the effect is still better. These leaves together with the very beautiful fern known as 'Connecticut

fern" are to be procured from parties in East Hartford, Conn., who make their proper preservation a business.

My leaves selected I proceeded to fill the outlines on the glass one by one with thick, colorless, quick drying varnish, pressing each leaf into its place with a piece of soft silk and taking care to fit the leaf stems into the sockets of the painted branches; my next care was for the leaves, which in the design were apparently drifting from these boughs down to the bed of ferns below; a thick coat of varnish over the back of leaves and branches and I was free to turn to my fern work.

A rather heavy band in the carved screen hid the meeting of the sashes and gave the appearance of one continuous pane of glass. I took large fronds of the dainty maiden's hair, and also of the coarser fern familiar to us all, and arranged them to project in careful carelessness about six inches above the screen, applying to the window in the same manner as to the leaves, carefully trimming with a sharp knife wherever they overlapped; their points were interlaced so as to almost wholly cover the glass, growing more and more dense as the base was approached; up a distance of six inches or more, at the extreme base, the delicate Hartford fern was trained crosswise as though running on the ground, perfectly hiding the base of the upright ferns and throwing occasionally up between them a graceful spray of leaves and fruitage; in this bed were small pieces of the autumn leaves to give the effect of leaves otherwise buried from sight in the fern. This work received a coat of varnish over the back,



TREATMENT OF WIDE WINDOW, BY J. P. MURRAY.

and after a few days I repeated this coating over the entire design, covering the edges but carefully avoiding the slightest smear on the glass, any such accident being rectified at once with a soft cloth and alcohol.

Outside, a few not too dense foliage plants; within, a little dried green and grey moss to cover the base of the sash and the window seat, held in place by a strip of carving to match the screen; a curtain of silk muslin with richly embroidered border, pendant from a lace like, mahogany colored cornice fitted to the oval top and my window was finished.

Seven years have passed since then bringing life's many changes, but still it stands to day not a color dimmed, not an outline broken. The silken curtain, the carved screen are gone indeed, but in its full perfection the design remains, unharmed by the destroying hand of time, or of that more merciless vandal, man.

COLONEL J. A. PRICE, of Scranton, Pa., offers through the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, of New York, three prizes of \$50, \$30 and \$20. The subject is the use of the plant and fruit of maize in the industrial and architectural arts, the idea having been suggested by recent discussions as to the flower which might be used as an emblem of the United States. Some newspapers have been full of cheap sentiment on the latter topic and have displayed astounding ignorance of what are and what are not plants native to American soil. But the competition is for a decorative theme on corn. The DECORATOR AND FURNISHER is as practical as its name would imply. Maize, it thinks, possesses unusual variety in its stalk, leaf, plume, silk, husk and ear; every part is essentially beautiful. It abounds in colors green and gold, and even the fruit has various tints and a shape that lends itself to ornament. Designs in black and white for Colonel Price's competition should be sent to the office of the magazine on or before December 5th.—Rochester Herald.